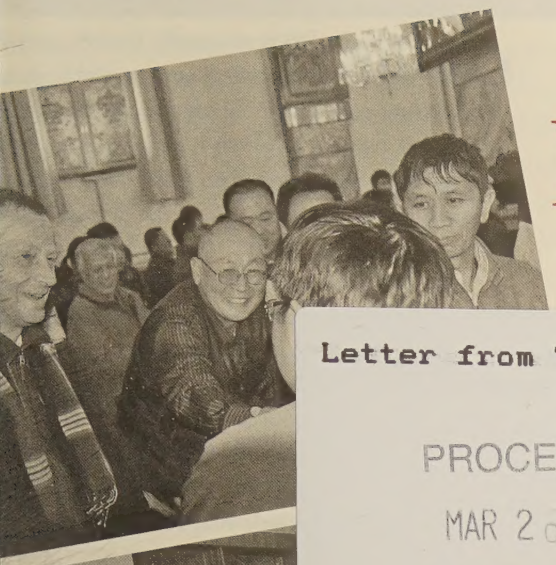
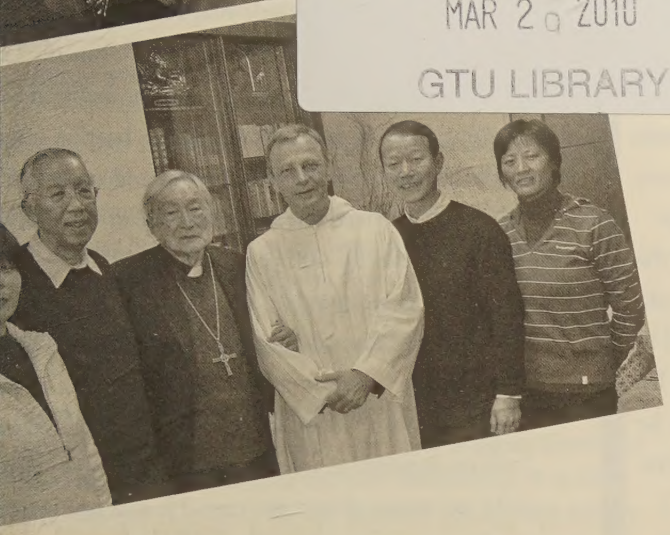


Letter from Taizé

n° 266 Quarterly 0,75 €
2010/1

Letter from Taizé
PROCESSED
MAR 2 0 2010
GTU LIBRARY



On the Road Towards Others

Following the European meeting in Poznan, we are sending you the *Letter from China*, written by Brother Alois.

In the course of this year we will be reflecting on different parts of the *Letter from China* through contributions written by young people from several continents. In this first issue of 2010, we are publishing some excerpts of the meditations spoken by Brother Alois at the end of every evening prayer in Poznan. These excerpts take up some key ideas of the *Letter*, especially those found in the introduction, devoted to his visit to China.

A THIRST FOR LIFE IN FULLNESS

When you arrived in Poznan, you received the *Letter from China*. The question that guided me in writing this letter is this: Why should we believe today? What are the reasons that may lead someone to believe in God, in Jesus Christ?

Two of my brothers and I made a three-week-long visit to the Christians of China. What struck me in that country was to see a spiritual longing present in so many young people. I met young people who were not believers and who are turning to religion.

In the West, thought we have a very different history, do we not find ourselves facing similar issues? Economic progress, and still more the current calling into question of this progress, does not allow us to close our eyes any longer. We cannot avoid asking ourselves: What can give direction to my life? What goal can I choose that is worth the effort?

We all feel that there needs to be major changes in our world. The structures of our societies and patterns of thought from the past are proving to be inadequate and insufficient to ensure that persons and peoples can live together in peace.

But we also discover that necessary change, particularly an overhaul of the world economic and financial system, is not possible without a change in the human heart. How can we lay the foundations for a fairer system as long as some continue to want to accumulate wealth at the expense of others?

We are here together so that each of us can begin or deepen such a change of heart.

From what source can we draw to undertake this change of heart? In every human heart there is a longing, a thirst for life in fullness. It is the longing to be loved and to love.

But at the same time, we all experience that this longing is only rarely satisfied, and never for all time. Far from discouraging us, this can allow us to discover over and over again a personal communion with God. Is not this thirst within us a mark engraved by God in us so that we can turn towards him?

SO WHY BELIEVE TODAY?

Economic progress, however important, cannot quench our deepest thirst. This thirst opens our heart so that we listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit whisper day and night within us: "You are loved forever and once and for all, and even the hardships of your life, however real and sometimes very hard, cannot eradicate this love."

And then our heart changes. And not

Continued on last page

Proclaiming the Unknown God

Read Acts 17:22-34

This speech that the apostle Paul gave to the philosophers in Athens has become famous. It is indeed one of the few Bible texts to describe an explicit contact between the two great sources of Western civilization, Athens and Jerusalem. The fact that the proclamation of the biblical God is made in the birthplace of philosophical thinking is an event in itself. But still more striking is the style of Paul's presentation.

A Jew comes to Athens to announce "Jesus and the Resurrection." The culture-shock must have been enormous. And Paul does not mince words in criticizing idols. "People of Athens, I see that in every way you are very religious": can we not discern, beyond the compliment, a touch of irony?

Despite the shock, Paul's preaching is magnificent. Without avoiding the element of confrontation inherent in the announcement of something radically new, he demonstrates a rare ability to adapt. He looks for a detail in the lives of those to whom he is speaking that enables him to anchor his announcement in their life-context (the altar of the Unknown God); he quotes the Greek poets ("We are his offspring"); he translates theology into philosophical categories ("in him we live and move and have our being").

This willingness to take seriously the context of the listeners is what will later be called, in the life of the Church, "inculturation." What Paul is doing here in one of the first and boldest examples of this.

Adapting does not mean truncating part of the truth. Paul still proclaims the heart of the biblical message. He gives a rapid summary, but a good one nonetheless: an affirmation of the Lordship of God over all things, the gift of life to humans, the coming of a man who opens the gates of forgiveness.

In societies where Christians are a minority, the fact of affirming that one is Christian may not always be very easy. At best, when we are asked about the hope that is in us, we manage to utter a few words cleverly chosen so as not to shock the hearers. And yet, how can Good News be communicated if you eliminate all its newness?

The proclamation of the faith that Paul makes in Athens will finally end in failure. Most of his listeners did not even stay to hear the whole message.Paul proposes a lot and seemingly harvests little. This is similar to the parable of the sower, where most of the seed does not fall on good ground. A few people, however, stayed with him and became believers. And what if those "few" made all his efforts worthwhile?

Am I sometimes able to speak about my faith without embarrassment?

What aspects of the faith are particularly hard to understand for people today?

Is it possible not to eliminate the element of provocation necessary to announce Good News without alienating the listeners?

Matteo Ricci

In the family of the Church throughout the ages, tain figures stand out because of their contribu to unity and understanding between people. On these is Matteo Ricci, who was one of the first sionaries in China. In his day, being a mission meant giving one's whole life, setting out on a j ney to a totally different world, to live out the Go among an unfamiliar people, and probably never turning to one's own country. Ricci, born in Italy, ordained priest in the Jesuit order and entered C in 1582. He lived there for the rest of his life, d in Beijing exactly 400 years ago, in 1610.

His life is remarkable first of all for his attitud deep respect towards the culture of China. The w "missionary" can sometimes evoke the idea of im sing European values so as to replace an indigen culture regarded as inferior. Ricci's life shows that is by no means always the case. He was not interes in Europeanizing the Chinese. But he was con ced that the love of God revealed in Christ is fo people, and that faith in him completes rather t simply replacing what human beings of all cult can discover by the light of their reason. So he sou to understand traditional Chinese wisdom as dee as possible, and to build bridges between it and Gospel. He mastered the Chinese spoken and w ten language; he adopted Chinese dress; he stud and even learned by heart the four major classic Confucianism; he took part in the intellectual bates that were important in China at the time; himself wrote a large number of books in Chinese well as translating Chinese works for European ders. He found that many of the ideas and princi of Confucianism were close to those of Christian and he sought to build on those links, as the Chu Fathers in the early centuries had built on the li between Greek philosophy and the Gospel. This a tude led to his being accepted in Chinese society equal terms, and his memory there is highly respec to this day. Yet he did not simply accept everyth in Chinese culture without distinction; when he certain points as incompatible with the Gospel (su

On the eve of the European young adult meeting in Poznan, Poland (December 2009), and the Asian young adult meeting in Manila, Philippines (February 2010), we are grateful for having been invited by Christians of China. A few of us brothers spent three weeks in their midst and were deeply moved by so many signs of hospitality. After the very different meetings that we had, it seems even more necessary to understand from within the situation of their Church and their great country, where 56 ethnic groups live.

At the entrance to the Catholic cathedral in Beijing, Christians take turns throughout the day welcoming those who arrive. An elderly woman told us, "After so many years when no expression of faith was possible, we saw church doors open in the late 1970s. Today more and more non-Christians come to see us. We are unable to welcome them all as well as we would like to."

A young man explained, "The Chinese soul has always believed in heaven, in a beyond. The past decades have not wiped out precious traditional values, in particular the search for harmony and respect for elders. In recent years material life has fortunately improved, but at the same time many feel a spiritual void and are looking for meaning in life. More and more young people are turning to religion, especially in the large cities."

The Church in China is still small and often lives with poor resources. And yet what dynamic faith there is among Christians! We admire their perseverance and their faithfulness. It is clear to us that God is at work. We met believers who, in their humble situation, play an active role in building the future of their country. In Sichuan province, for example, after the great earthquake of 2008, some went to help offer aid to the victims; they are still there and are deeply appreciated by the population.

Several people told us about the suffering that their parents or grandparents endured for the faith. Everyone we met was grateful to know that believers in other places feel close to them. In a large Protestant church, when we said that at Taizé young people from all continents pray every Friday for the Christians of China, everyone applauded spontaneously.

The wounds of the divisions within the churches left by recent history is very painful. Convinced that the time has come to move beyond them, there are Christians who at present are seeking reconciliation. It is important for this to begin in the hearts of believers. Turning to God together in common prayer could be a way to show that unity is possible.

In China more and more Christians are becoming sensitive to points of convergence between the Gospel and the legacy of ancient wisdom. All across Asia, there are those who seek to live the Gospel in dialogue with cultures and different religions, and by paying particular attention to the poor. Could Christians on other continents let themselves be inspired to a greater extent by this approach?

As a sign of friendship and gratitude to the Christians of China, in 2009 our Taizé Community had a million Bibles printed through Operation Hope and circulated them in all parts of the country.

LETTER 2010

Letter from China

IN EVERY HUMAN BEING, A LONGING

Beyond the broad cultural differences that can create barriers between the continents, all human beings form one family[1]: our visit to China has strengthened this conviction in us.

Whatever our culture, our age or our history, we share a longing, a thirst for life in fullness.

The Bible often returns to that thirst. It sees it as a mark engraved by God in us to draw us towards him.[2] Will we allow that thirst to hollow us out, without wanting to satisfy it too quickly?[3] It can become a love burning within us for the One who is always beyond what we can grasp of Him.[4]

The more we seek God, the more we can make this astonishing discovery: God is the one who seeks us first. In the book of the prophet Hosea, God speaks to his people as a man to the woman he loves: "I am going to seduce her; I will lead her out into the wilderness and speak to

1 We are one human family inhabiting the same planet; that is why it is urgent to take responsibility all together for creation and the environment.

2 "God, my God, I seek you at dawn; my soul is thirsting for you. My flesh yearns for you, like a dry and parched land without water" (Psalm 63:1). "My soul longs for you in the night; in the depths of my being my spirit seeks you" (Isaiah 26:9).

3 We may be tempted to satisfy our desires in a superficial manner. Is not overconsumption, in particular, a way of not dealing with some questions that we are afraid to think through to the end?

4 In the fourth century, St. Gregory Nazianzen sang of the mystery of God: "You are the One beyond all; how can we call you by another name? What hymn can we sing to you? No words are able to express you.... A universal longing, the groaning of all, aspires to you." And at the same time Saint Augustine wrote: "Through our longing, God increases desire. By this desire, he hollows out the soul. By hollowing it out, he enables it to desire."

her heart." Then he adds: "I will make you my wife forever... in tenderness and mercy."[5]

In Jesus, this desire of God for human beings becomes a flesh-and-blood reality.[6] Christ wanted to stay close to us forever and he paid the price for this: by his death on a cross, he went down to the lowest place, to the point of becoming the innocent one persecuted for no reason. Now, risen from the dead, he communicates the Holy Spirit to us, an invisible presence that draws us towards the fullness of God.

SORTING OUT OUR DESIRES

The human heart overflows with an abundance of desires and aspirations: we want so many different things, sometimes even contradictory ones. But we also know that we cannot do or have everything. Far from leading to sad resignation, this awareness can liberate us and help us live in a more unimpeded way.[7]

Yes, it is important to sort out our desires. Not all are bad, and not all are good either. We must patiently learn which to give precedence to and which to set aside.

Deciding which aspirations come first, paying attention to what is found in our depths, is already a way of listening to God. God also speaks to us through our desires. It is up to us to discern his voice in the midst of so many inner voices.[8]

AWAKENING IN OURSELVES THE DESIRE FOR GOD

And we must let the deepest of all longings awaken in us: the desire for God!

It is true that it is not easy to keep alive the spirit of wonder and adoration, since our societies set such a high value on efficiency and doing things as quickly as possible. Yet during long silences where nothing seems to happen the Holy Spirit is at work within us, without our knowing how.

Knowing how to wait... Being present, simply, with no ulterior motive. Kneeling down, recognizing that God is present. Opening our hands in a gesture of welcome. Quieting down is already an expression of openness to God.

Gestures of worship and meditation have been part of Asian cultures for centuries. Could Christians affected by secularization find an encouragement to renew their prayer there? In liturgies and gatherings, inwardness can be combined with a communal and festive dimension.

SHARING WHAT WE HAVE

Letting ourselves be penetrated by the thirst for God does not detach us from the concerns of the world around us. On the contrary, this thirst leads us to do all we can so that others may enjoy the benefits of creation and find joy in living.[9]

Sorting out our desires, accepting not to have everything, leads us not to monopolize wealth for ourselves.[10] Already in the fourth century St. Ambrose said, "It is not your property that you distribute to the poor; you are simply giving back to them what is theirs."

Learning not to have everything preserves us from isolation. Material affluence is often accompanied by a turning inwards, with a loss of real communication. It would not take much for things to be different.[11]

Many initiatives of sharing are within our grasp: developing support networks, fostering an economy of solidarity, welcoming immigrants, travelling in order to understand other cultures and other human situations from within, promoting twinning between towns, villages or parishes, to help those who are in need, making good use of new technologies to create links of mutual assistance....

We must be careful not to let ourselves be overwhelmed by a pessimistic vision of the future by focusing

5 Hosea 2:16,21.

6 One day, Jesus asked a woman beside a well: "Give me a drink"(John 4:7). The rest of the story shows that, in fact, he was thirsting to communicate the gift of God. On the cross he would say again, "I am thirsty" (John 19:28). According to the context, is this thirst not the ultimate expression of Jesus' desire to give life and in this way to communicate the gift of God?

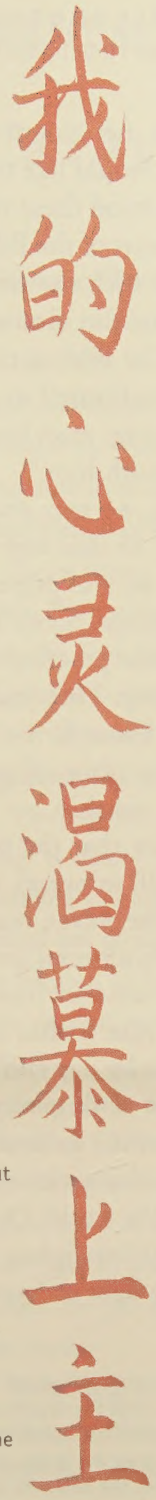
7 Is it not essential to learn to cope with the incomplete and unpredictable character of our lives? The most affluent societies often seek to hide this reality. The main concern then becomes to hide one's vulnerability, forgetting that inner flaws, suffering and death are also part of life.

8 "I bless the Lord who has counseled me, and even by night my heart instructs me" (Psalm 16:7).

9 Faith is not just concerned with a religious domain. Nothing that affects the quality of life can leave us indifferent. Scientific research, artistic expression, political, trade-union or social commitments can be a way of serving God. To study or teach, manage a business with humanity, devote ourselves to our family, expand our friendships, all this can prepare the coming of the Kingdom of God.

10 A reworking of the global economic and financial system cannot come about without a change in the human heart: how can the foundations of a fairer system be laid as long as some continue to want to accumulate wealth at the expense of others?

11 When our community prepares young adult meetings in major cities on different continents, as stages of the "pilgrimage of trust on earth", we invite thousands of families to welcome into their homes one or more young people they do not know and whose language they may not even speak. And we see that it takes little to reveal the goodness present in the human heart.



on bad news. War is not inevitable.[12] Respect for others is a priceless blessing to prepare peace. The borders of the richest countries must become more open. Greater justice on earth is possible.[13]

Analyses and calls for promoting justice and peace abound. What is lacking is the motivation necessary to persevere beyond good intentions.

The Gospel calls us to simplicity. Choosing simplicity opens our heart to sharing and to the joy that comes from God.

DEEPENING TRUST IN GOD

While faith seems to be vanishing in many societies, a spiritual longing is being reborn. We need to discover the right words, simple ones, to make accessible to others the faith that gives us life.

Many people cannot believe that God loves them personally. For some, too many trials make it impossible to trust in God.[14] How then can we express more clearly that God takes seriously doubt and revolt against what is absurd?[15] Jesus himself shared the pain of those who suffer, crying out on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"[16]

Many children grow up without anyone ever telling them that God loves them. What young people will walk alongside one or more of them on the path of faith?

Upon entering adulthood, there are those who lose their association with the Christian community. Often it is not a conscious decision, but a chain of circumstances which relegates faith to the bottom of the ladder of priorities. How can friends help each other to renew a relationship with the local community of believers?

Sometimes a gap widens between knowledge in the domain of faith and that acquired in other areas. A faith that remains on the level of phrases learned during childhood will find it hard to face the questions of adulthood. We can find happiness in deepening our understanding of the mystery of faith at every stage of our lives.[17]

RENEWING OUR COURAGE

God calls us to transform the world, with great ambition but also deep humility.

Older people can encourage the young. The younger generations are no less capable than their predecessors.

This transformation has to begin with ourselves: we must allow the risen Christ to change our hearts, and allow the Holy Spirit to lead us out into deep waters so we can head courageously into the future.

Let us rejoice in the thirst God has placed in us! It gives renewed vitality to our whole lives. "Let whoever is thirsty come; let whoever desires it receive the water of life, free of charge."[18]

f. Alois

12 Despite doubts and even failures, the early twenty-first century has been marked by a growing affirmation of international awareness and the search for a more intense organization of relations between peoples: mobilization of public opinion, attempts to respond jointly to current challenges (climate, environment, health, economy).... Increased interdependence between nations can raise fears, awakening defensive reactions to shore up one's identity. But might it not also become a guarantee of peace?

13 There are still nine million children under the age of five who die each year, and 29% of the children who survive in underdeveloped countries are victims of malnutrition. This is totally unacceptable. At the same time, it should be emphasized that, thanks to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, approved unanimously by the Assembly General of the United Nations in 1989, the way children are treated has been transformed: by a concerted international effort; mortality and malnutrition have decreased almost 30% in the last twenty years.

14 This is not the case for all those who are undergoing great trials. I think of a young man I sometimes meet in Taizé. He has an incurable illness that is getting worse. He suffers terribly. Already many opportunities for a fulfilling life are disappearing. And yet the look in his eyes and his whole attitude remain surprisingly open. One day he said to me, "Now I know what it means to trust. Previously I did not need to, but now I do." And he added in a letter he wrote to me, "I must not let my illness occupy my whole attention." Then I told myself: if this young man could know how much his words keep me going and how he helps so many others by his attitude. There is in him a kind of reflection, very humble but real, of the mystery of the Resurrection.

15 Among the books that make up the Bible and even among the sacred texts of other religions, there may be none that express the revolt of a suffering innocent man as vehemently as the Book of Job. Job denounces the absurdity of a life of suffering, and he complains about a world where it would have been better not to have been born. But even in the violence of his revolt, he speaks to God. He does not get all his questions answered, but he finds peace in an encounter with God.

16 Mark 15:34.

17 Ways exist: Bible groups, short Bible readings for each day, a time of silent retreat, training in parishes, studies organized in collaboration with theological faculties or other Church institutions, courses on the internet...

18 Revelation 22:17.

In Europe, but also in other regions of the world, this question is being put more and more forcefully.

Twenty years ago, just before the great changes in Europe, we were able to leap over many obstacles and prepare two young adult meetings in Central Europe:

– an East-West meeting in Pécs, Hungary. While the young people were gathering, the «Iron Curtain» across Europe was opened between Hungary and Austria.

– a European meeting in Wroclaw, Poland. During the preparation for this meeting the Berlin Wall fell, which allowed 50,000 young people from the entire continent to meet together freely for the first time.

In Wroclaw, Brother Roger told the participants, "During this year several peoples have seen iron curtains fall and, at the same time, walls of fear and humiliation have broken down. So in recent weeks, many have been praying day and night for the freedom of peoples."

Twenty years later, in 2009, three meetings brought together young people: in May in Vilnius (Lithuania) in October at Pécs (Hungary), and late December in Poznan (Poland) for the European meeting.

On this occasion, we would like to ask ourselves: today, in Europe as well as across all the continents, are we reflecting enough on the meaning of freedom? Every young person could ask themselves: What are you doing with your freedom?

In China, we met groups of Christians very aware of that treasure which is the Bible.[1] Some would like to read it more, but this is not always easy. With them we called to mind these two pathways:

– At the heart of the Bible is God's love. Between God and humanity, everything begins with the freshness of a first love; then come the obstacles, and even infidelity. But God does not tire of loving; he always keeps searching for his people. The Bible is the story of God's faithfulness.

– God gives himself to us through Christ: he is the Word of God. When we read the Bible we meet him, Christ; we hear his voice; we enter into a personal relationship with him.[2]

In reading, we may retain just one word. The important thing is to put it into practice. In that way we come to understand it better and better.

In China, we also prayed with Christians used to singing the songs of Taizé in their language. Some asked us how best to organize a prayer with others. We shared some practical details with them, inspired by the long experience of our community. They must, of course, be in harmony with the particularities of each local Church:

• Make the place of prayer welcoming using simple means, so that it is conducive to worship.

• Make sure that the prayer flows smoothly: songs, psalm, reading, song, silence (8 to 10 minutes), intercessions, Our Father, final prayer, songs.

• During the prayer, read a short Bible text that is easy to understand, keeping more difficult texts for an explanation outside of common prayer.

• Sing one sentence from Scripture or tradition over and over again, in order to let it take root within us. A sung phrase is easily learned by heart and can accompany us by day and sometimes at night.

• Make use of simple symbols: Friday evening, for example, place an icon of the cross on the ground. All can go up and lay their foreheads on the cross, expressing by this action that they entrust to Christ their own burdens and the sufferings of the world. On Saturday evening, read the Gospel of the Resurrection while children light a small candle that everyone has been given, transmitting to all the light of Easter.

1 Across the world, there are many examples which show how the Bible has been loved, how it penetrated the depths of the human being and how far this love could lead. In Latvia, in 1940, a priest named Victor was arrested one day because he had a Bible. The regime's agents threw the Bible on the ground and ordered the priest to trample on it. He knelt and kissed the book. He was then sentenced to ten years' hard labor in Siberia.

2 Speaking of the Scriptures, a bishop of the Philippines said: "God speaks, but God also listens, especially to widows, orphans, the persecuted, to the poor who have no voice. So to understand the Word of God, we must learn to listen the way God does."

Some steps in 2010 of the pilgrimage of trust on earth

Brother Alois will go, with other brothers...
... to Portugal:
meeting in Porto, February 13-16
... to Bosnia-Herzegovina:
Sarajevo, September 3-5
... to Norway:
Oslo and Trondheim, September 17-19

International young adult meetings
The fifth Asian Meeting will be held in the Philippines, in Manila, February 3-7, 2010

The second international Meeting in Latin America will be held in Santiago, Chile, December 8-12, 2010
The 33rd European Meeting will be held in Rotterdam, Netherlands, December 28, 2010 – January 1, 2011

Messages received for the meeting in Poznan: see http://www.taize.fr

trology, or marriage contracts arranged between
ldren, or the adoration of images) he was clear
ut his views, and he did not waver in his faith.
pect without relativism: it is a model of what to-
we would call inculturation and dialogue.

philosophy could be a means towards truth and
reparation for the further truth that is uniquely
aled in Christ, Ricci saw that the same can be
of the natural sciences. The tragic later tensions
ween science and faith had not yet begun to be
and he had a deep knowledge of contempora-
stronomy and mathematics; he wrote books in
nese on these subjects. Chinese intellectuals ap-
ciated the very accurate calculations of eclipses
other phenomena linked to the calendar that the
onomical knowledge of Ricci and the Jesuits per-
ted. Some of the astronomical instruments that
ci's successors constructed in China are still on
blic display in Beijing today. In Ricci's view, a good
derstanding of physical phenomena was a help to
biding a superstitious attitude to nature, and a use-
preparation for coming to know God, creator of
things.

Another very significant aspect of Ricci's life is his
istence on friendship. He was not someone who
eached from a distance. He expressed the faith by
aking friends, by being ready to explain to indi-
lual people the hope that motivated him, without
posing his views where they were not welcome. His
ors were open to welcome anyone who wanted to
it him. In fact, he received so many visits by day
at often his own personal work and prayer – and
metimes even meals – had to be left for the night.
iendship was the theme of the most successful of
e books he wrote in Chinese, a short volume called
aoyoulun. (One of the earliest editions was pub-
shed in Nanjing in about 1599: who would have
ought that in the same city a million Bibles would
e printed to be distributed by Taizé in 2009?)

What motivated this openness to friendship with all
eoples, this confident fascination with the truths of
ience, and this respect for the truths and the values
f a very different culture, was a sure trust in God as
rigin of all truth and creator of all people. As he ex-
lained, 天主为父母, 以世人为弟兄, 以天下为已家焉, "We regard the Lord of Heaven as
ur Father and Mother, and all men as our brothers.
We look on the whole world as our family."

Can we speak of mission today?

There are Christians for whom it goes without saying that the Churches must be missionary. Others are reluctant to say this. They believe that mission has too often gone hand in hand with a strategy of conquest and colonialism. In our multicultural societies, reluctance with regard to mission also comes from a concern for social peace. For there are indeed movements of aggressive religious propaganda that endanger the fragile equilibrium of societies.

To see things more clearly, we need to clarify what is meant by mission. Without pretending naively to ignore history, it is useful to examine the New Testament. The experience of the Apostles and the early Christian communities can serve as a criterion to distinguish the wheat from the weeds in the history of Christian mission, and can also provide guidance for today.

The origin of mission is Jesus' sending of his disciples (in Latin, "sending" is *missio*). He sent them out as poor and defenseless men: "I am sending you like lambs among wolves" (Luke 10:3). He did not send them out to conquer. He did not send them to be eaten, either. That is because he had confidence that peace is possible along the lines of the ancient promise: "The wolf shall lie down with the lamb" (Isaiah 11:6).

Jesus sends out his disciples to proclaim that God is to coming to establish his Kingdom, in other words, to take things in hand. Initially, the disciples must not teach but only go from town to town with the good news of God's peace. Later on, after the resurrection, they also will have to teach the commandments of Jesus (Matthew 28:20), especially the one about loving one's enemies, the only guarantee of peace on earth.

In sending them as lambs among wolves, Jesus instructed his disciples not to be afraid to mingle with others. A whole series of parables confirms this (Matthew 5:13-16; 13:33). Salt must be combined with what is to be salted. Light achieves its effect by entering into the darkness. And it is the leaven well mixed in the dough that raises it. Being sent out, being a missionary, means not living for ourselves but for others. Seeking contact, especially with those who are different, instead of isolating ourselves.

Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you" (John 20:21). The model of Christian mission is the mission of Christ, the one sent from God. "He forsook everything he had and took the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:7). He agreed to leave "the bosom of the Father," as the Gospel puts it (John 1:18), to enter into our life. He calls us to go to meet others in our turn, without fear and without pretension.

just our heart, but also our way of looking and our behavior. We become more able to discern: without being naïve we become better able to dialogue, to reach out to others, to make our life a pilgrimage of trust. And in this way we will contribute as Christians to help determine the face of the new world that is emerging.

CHOOSING SIMPLICITY

Many of us want to make this far-reaching commitment: choosing simplicity of life.

Choosing simplicity opens our heart to share. Many initiatives of sharing and humanitarian commitments are within our reach.

I think of some nuns I visited in China. They went to settle in the region of Sichuan, where there were major earthquakes in 2008. They are bringing help to suffering people. But they cannot speak about their faith. They can only be a silent presence, a reflection of the baby Jesus born silently in Bethlehem.

Listening to those nuns, we understood better the path of sharing, simplicity and selflessness.

One of them told us, "After several months of working with people, many of us are going through a period of doubt. Why is there so much suffering?" Another said, "Seeing our inability to help people, I feel like Mary under the Cross."

Yet another told us: "We were asked not to speak of the faith; that's hard but I understand my vocation even better; being close to people is already living the Gospel. People suspect that there is a meaning to our lives, even if it escapes them."

Could the testimony of those Christian Chinese religious women sustain our hope and the courage to choose simplicity?

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF FREEDOM?

Today, are we thinking enough about the meaning of freedom? Freedom means being able to choose where to set our priorities. Freedom means not giving in to negative tendencies in ourselves. Freedom also enables us to fight against the structures of injustice in our societies.

Freedom also means being able to express our faith. During my recent visit to China with two of my brothers, several people told us about the suffering that their parents or grandparents endured for the faith. Many of you who come from Poland or other countries of Central and Eastern Europe also have parents and grandparents who know what it means to suffer for the faith.

We want to thank God for those Christians who have persevered and remained faithful. Today we can be close to believers in China. They are touched when they learn that at Taizé we pray for them on Friday evenings.

"I DO NOT KNOW THE FUTURE, BUT I KNOW GOD"

If I spoke to you every night about our trip to China, that was because I felt how special it is to be associated with the Christians in that country. China was a closed country for so long. Today we cannot stay away; that country is closer to us than we realize.

I would like to speak about two more people I met on that trip. In Shanghai I saw a 93-year-old bishop who was in prison for 23 years because of his faith. In the difficult years, he thought that all religions would disappear from China, that there would no longer be any faith and that perhaps only after a hundred years missionaries would return. Things happened differently than he thought. He dared, after so many years in prison, to take on responsibilities.

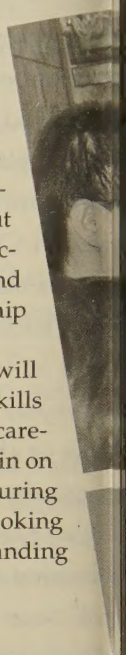
One of the strongest testimonies was given by an 80-year-old Protestant pastor. He was in a work camp for 27 years, first imprisoned and then exiled far from home. "In that camp," he told us, "we were together with Christians of other denominations; there were pastors, priests, a bishop." Then he stood up and said forcefully: "I know there is only one body of Christ; in him we are united; I have experienced this."

And he added: "At a time when nothing of the Church was visible, the invisible Church existed nonetheless. What kept me going were the words of Isaiah where God says: 'My ways are not your ways'." And when I asked him how he saw the future, he replied: "I do not know the future, but I know God. God will guide us step by step."

There are Christians in China who, like that pastor, are presently seeking reconciliation. This is something urgent between denominations, but also within each Church. In this, in Taizé, we feel very close to them.

As in China, in the West a new thirst for interiority is emerging and attention to a beyond is being reborn. That is a sign of hope.

So the time has come for you, young people, to realize that it is up to you to transmit trust in God to others. Even if you have understood little of the Gospel, put it into practice; talk to your friends who do not know the faith, and accompany some children along the path of faith, too.



You know all of your peers who, upon entering adulthood, are losing their links with the Christian community, not necessarily by a conscious decision but by a simple chain of circumstances. Will you go towards them and seek ways to renew a relationship with the faith?

In coming years, some of you will acquire much knowledge and skills in your studies or your work. Be careful then not to let your faith remain on the level of expressions learned during childhood. Back home, keep on looking for ways to deepen your understanding of the mystery of faith.

You can find all Brother Alois' meditations in Poznan on our website: www.taize.fr, in the section "Meeting in Poznan".

Letter from Taizé

Annual subscription
Ordinary subscription: 6 (France 4,5) Euros
Supporting subscription: 10 or 20 Euros

Means of payment:
by **credit card** Visa, Mastercard, Eurocard, Carte Bleue: send the number of your card and dates of validity to Taizé, and say what sum in Euros you wish to transfer.
by **international Giro transfer** in Euros addressed to: Lettre de Taizé, IBAN: FR16 2004 1010 0700 6144 6M03 871, BIC: PSSTFRPPLYO.
by **cheque** in Euros to Lettre de Taizé, Taizé Community, 71250 Taizé, France, made payable through Société Générale.

In certain countries it is possible to pay within the country:
Australia: $12 - Letter from Taizé, Patricia Ho, P.O. Box 694, West Ryde 1685 NSW. **Canada**: $10 Letter from Taizé, c/o Lesley Santiago, 145 College Circle, Ottawa, Ontario, K1K 4S1.
New Zealand: $15 - c/o Jenny Chisholm, 13 Arden Way, 6012 Wilton, Wellington. **UK**: £4.50 - Letter from Taizé, c/o Nick and Jane SHIELDS, 42 Blenheim Road, St Johns, WAKEFIELD, W. Yorkshire WF1 3JZ. **USA**: $7 - Letter from Taizé, c/o Bruder, P.O. Box 1954, Lenox, MA 01240.
For Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden, write to Taizé to ask for the address in your country.

Asia: The Letter from Taizé can also be obtained in the following Asian countries. Contributions towards the cost of photocopying and postage will be most welcome. **Bangladesh**: Letter from Taizé, P O Box 48, H.P.O. 2200, Mymensingh. **Cambodia**: Fr. Sri Pramong Virachai, BP 123 Phnom Penh. **East Timor**:CP 299,Dili **Hong Kong**: Ingrid Chan, Flat H, 14/F, Tower 125, 11 Po Yan Street, Sheung Wan. **India**: Letter from Taizé, c/o Sr Kochu, FMM, Stella Maris College, 17, Cathedral Road, Chennai 600 086. **Indonesia**: Sister Be Kien Nio, Biarawati Ursulin, Jln Anggrek 60, Bandung 40114. **Japan**: Isao Uematsu, c/o Yoda, 6-43-5 Shimoshakujii, Nerima-ku, Tokyo 177-0042. **Korea**: English edition. Ordinary Subscription: 2,000 Supporting Subscription: 4,000 to: Letter from Taizé, c/o Hwa Gok Dong 105-51, Kang Seo Ku, Seoul 157-010. **Malaysia**: Georgina Wong, N° 31 Jalan Wan Alwi 6A, Lihang 93750 Kuching, Sarawak. **Myanmar**: Youth Commission, CBCM, 292A Pyi Road, Sanchaung PO, Yangon 1111. **Pakistan**: Yaqub Sadeq, Catholic Church, Toba Tek Singh. **Philippines**: Letter from Taizé, c/o 28 San Antonio Street, San Francisco Del Monte, Quezon City. **Singapore**: Angela Lee, 79 King's Road, 268141. **Sri Lanka**: Martin Costa, 31 Major Lalaka Fernando Mawatha, Kapuwatte Ja-Ela. **Taiwan**: Anna Tang, Aurora Center, N° 9, Lane 71, Hang Chow S. Road, Sec. 1, Taipei, ROC. **Thailand**: CYO, 122/6-7 Soi Naksuwan, Nonsee Road, Yannawa, Bangkok 10120.

Correspondence: Letter from Taizé,
Taizé Community, 71250 Taizé, France
e-mail: letter@taize.fr www.taize.fr
News from Taizé by email twice a month free of charge:
www.taize.fr/taizenews.php
Directeur de publication : A. Trochard, Edition et impression : Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 71250 Taizé, France, CPPAP n° 0110K79608 - DL 1075